

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2003

The Honorable Ann Veneman  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
200 Admin Building  
14<sup>th</sup> Street & Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman,

As ranchers and farmers across the country struggle to recover from one of the worst droughts ever, it is clear to us that an extension of the Lamb Market Adjustment Assistance Program (LMAAP) is crucially needed. An extension of assistance for another year to July 31, 2004, will help lamb producers complete the task of recovery and, more importantly, adapt to the considerable structural changes suffered by their domestic markets over the last few years.

The droughts of the last several years fell upon sheep ranchers just as they were fighting to reshape their industry in the wake of devastating import surges from Australia and New Zealand. The damage suffered by the industry from the severe weather has hampered the full recuperative effect originally intended by establishment of the LMAAP, and has undermined the industry's capacity to adapt to the changing markets. Additionally, an important revision to the ewe lamb program - while helpful and much appreciated - is less than a year old.

Yet, the LMAAP has shown initial and significant success, as it has been used to enhance the competitiveness of both individual producers and the industry, as a whole, in many important respects. We have already observed improvements for breeding ewe lambs in states where the drought was least severe. Unfortunately, areas hit hardest by the drought have experienced overall declines.

In short, the LMAAP offers the kinds of assistance needed by the industry, but requires more time to fulfill its mission. An extension would better enable the lamb industry not only to recover but also to rebuild.

We urge you to extend LMAAP and look forward to your review of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Don Wyden

Jeffrey

Heur

Tom Kischle

Jeff Brin  
Chris Hatch

Byron G. Doan

Simon Johnson

Jim Jeffords

Wayne Allard

E. Benjamin Johnson

Patty Murray

Ray Dwyer Hutchinson

George Allen

Michael B. Enzi

Barth Stans (circled)

Ch. Smith